

ADVENT:

The Beginnings of Modern Spiritualism.



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PREFACE.

The following chapters first appeared as a series of essays in *The Lyceum Banner*, and were written to give to Spiritualists, especially those who are student Lyceumists, reliable information about the beginnings of Modern Spiritualism.

The story of the psychic experiences of the Fox family is to Spiritualism what the story of Jesus is to Christianity; and we here give to our readers a clear and concise account of what happened at Hydesville, and of the far-reaching results and developments from such seemingly insignificant beginnings; together with the author's foreshadowing of still further developments. The booklet gives in concise form all the pertinent facts and important deductions, and shows how the events of 1848, and the consequent upheaval in views then held, inaugurated a movement of ever-increasing magnitude and importance.

The chapters are republished because of repeated requests from various quarters that essays of such value and importance should be offered to the public in booklet form.

The Management Committee of the Union express their gratitude to the author for his untiring work for education, and for the gift of these essays.

JANUARY, 1925,

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ADVENT:

THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

The object of all study is to find out "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Therefore, the writer of a scientific or historical treatise who introduces more than is needed for the accomplishment of his task, is not only wasting space, but is supplying matter which may confuse and mislead the student. Personal comments, emotionalism, and homilies based on facts, are equally out of place in a text-book—where facts, and facts only, should be stated. The author may reasonably, and with benefit to the student, devote some space to an impartial examination of the facts supplied, and may even help new students by pointing out their significance—but anything in the nature of rhapsody should be avoided.

In the following chapters I propose to relate the plain story of the Hydesville Knockings, and events following or related to them; and then, taking the various evidences and sources of evidence, to examine them calmly and critically—finally disregarding everything at all liable to challenge, and emphasising the historic, scientific, or

logical value of the remaining facts or proofs. It must be borne in mind, however, that any evidential points disregarded are not necessarily discredited or rejected, but are only put to one side because they are not now capable of conclusive proof, and may be denied just as logically as they may be affirmed. The sole intention is to show that, apart from these debatable points, there is undeniable proof that on the night of 31st March, 1848, a human spirit broke through the barrier separating this life from the life to come, and established intelligent communication between the physical and spiritual planes of existence.

The story really commences on the fateful 31st March, 1848, the stories relating the previous events having been told after that date. But, in order to get the proper "atmosphere" for my story, I am going to begin with 11th December, 1847, when John D. Fox took over the tenancy, and deal first with the period beginning with that date and ending with the night when the invisible knocker proved that he could "see as well as hear." I shall then describe the method of investigation undertaken by the Foxes and their neighbours, and proceed to the stories told by Lucretia Pulver and her mother, and the Weekmans—and also the denial made by John C. Bell and his friends. The removal to, and experiences in, Rochester will next be dealt with, including the four meetings in Corinthian Hall, with the tests to which the young mediums were put. I shall then ask the reader to join with me in examining the evidence—including the finding of the skeleton in 1904 (56 years afterwards); and we shall devote a chapter to recording our reasoned conclusions.

This will really conclude the story of Hydesville; but as, in this country, the average investigator is unaware of the many eminent people who, in those early days, carried out tests and satisfied themselves of the truth of Spirit return and communication, I have thought that it would be both helpful and interesting if I added further chapters on events at Auburn, and the tests received by early investigators. Also, as a warning against giving way to fanatical sentimentality, I shall describe the results of this

disease as it exhibited itself in one case in America, and shall conclude with a statement of my opinion of a sane Spiritualism that should go serenely on its way, acknowledged on all sides as a science, a philosophy and a new revelation of religion.

It is impossible to emphasise too strongly the great importance to the Spiritualist Movement of these early knockings. They were not by any means the first recorded (the Epworth knockings occurred in 1716-17), but on this occasion, for the first time, the spiritual telegraph was intelligently used, and the messages received given not to a select body, but to the world at large. And there are many evidences that the world was gradually being prepared for a spiritual outpouring, one of the most important being recorded by Mrs. Britten in her "History of Modern American Spiritualism" (1870). She had been lecturing near a community of "Shakers" (who, according to Mrs. Britten, claim that since their foundation manifestations of spiritual presence: through rappings, movements of furniture, visions, trance, clairaudience and clairvoyance: have been common amongst them), and was visited by a deputation, one of whom produced a document, signed by many witnesses, and dated about 1829-30, in which the "great spiritual crisis" of 1848 was foretold, and the Shakers warned that their special gifts would be withdrawn for a season and poured out upon "the world's people." To this end the Spirit organisers began to prepare mediums, and took advantage of the spread of mesmerism to send through messages whose spiritual source is now acknowledged—the greatest of these "mesmeric subjects" being Andrew Jackson Davis. His "Divine Revelations" and "Great Harmonia" were produced before the date of the Hydesville Knockings, but the Harmonial Philosophy is acknowledged to be decidedly Spiritualistic.

But whilst minds like those of Andrew Jackson Davis and the Rev. S. B. Britain were being prepared as channels for the sublime utterances of exalted spiritual entities, the Spirit organisers were choosing a place and a medium whereby they could attract the attention of the whole world. The place selected was Hydesville, and the

mediums were the Fox sisters. The selection was not made in any haphazard fashion; for the aura of the little homestead was so favourable that the murdered pedlar had already been able to knock, and in the Fox family had already been manifested the possession of psychic powers. Mrs. Fox's sister and maternal grandmother were intuitive clairvoyants, and had many convincing experiences—so the mediumistic gifts of the Fox girls were inherited. The Spirit operators had carefully selected all the instruments required for their great effort.

CHAPTER II.

HYDESVILLE.

In the little Hamlet of Hydesville, near the town of Newark, Wayne County, New York State, stood a cluster of wooden homesteads, one of which has since become famous all over the world. This house was a humble frame dwelling, facing south; consisting of two fair-sized parlours opening into each other; east of these a bedroom and a pantry opening into one of the sitting-rooms—and a stairway between the pantry and the bedroom, leading from the sitting-room up to the half-storey above, and from the pantry down to the cellar. Into it, on 11th December, 1847, there moved a farmer named John David Fox, with his wife and two little daughters—Margaretta, aged 15 years, and Catherine, aged 12.

Soon after their arrival, the Foxes were occasionally disturbed by hearing noises in the house during the night. By the month of January these noises had developed into slight knockings. It sounded like someone knocking on the floor of the east bedroom, and sometimes as if the furniture was being moved about. At first Mrs. Fox thought it was the hammering of a neighbouring shoe-maker, but it soon became evident that the knockings were located in the house; for not only could the knocks be heard in different parts of the house, but the family noticed that the knocks were accompanied by a slight, tremulous jarring of the chairs and beds, and also sometimes of the floor—the motion being distinctly felt if a hand was placed on a chair, or if any of them stood on the floor.

After a time the noises varied, sounding sometimes as if someone was walking in the different rooms.

During February the noises developed in loudness and varied in character, and became so frequent that the family began to be worn out through lack of proper rest. Not only did the sounds continue, but occasionally the bed-clothes were pulled during the night, chairs were moved from their places, and on one occasion the children were frightened by feeling something heavy, like a large dog, lying across their feet. Night after night, Mr. Fox and his wife got up, lit a candle, and searched the house from attic to cellar—but all to no purpose. Although the noises continued during the search—from the walls, from the floor, and even from the cellar—they were unable to discover anything that would explain what was happening.

Gradually, during March, the noises increased in loudness and frequency, and the climax was reached when, one night near the end of March, Kate, the youngest girl, felt as if a cold hand was being passed over her face; and this so alarmed the children that Mrs. Fox decided to move their bed into her room. On March 30th, they were disturbed all night, the noises being heard in all parts of the house, even on the door. At first, Mr. Fox stood behind the door, ready to open it the instant the raps were heard; but though he opened the door immediately, he was not able to see anyone, or to find any clue to the mystery. Then Mr. Fox stood outside the door, whilst Mrs. Fox stood inside—and the knocks came on the door between them! They heard footsteps in the pantry, and as if someone was walking downstairs, but all their searching was of no avail. They found it impossible to rest, and at last Mrs. Fox, remembering other stories she had heard, came to the conclusion that the house was haunted by some restless, unhappy spirit.

Friday, 31st March, set in cold and stormy, snow falling all the day. During the afternoon Mrs. Fox confided her troubles to her son David (who lived on a farm two or three miles away), and he was inclined to smile at the whole affair.

"Well, mother," he said, "I advise you not to say a word about it to the neighbours. When you find it out, it will be one of the simplest things in the world."

On Friday evening the family prepared to go to bed about dusk, in the hope of getting a good night's rest. But before Mr. Fox had got into bed the noises commenced. Mrs. Fox, who had retired, got up resigned to enduring another weary night of disturbance. But on this occasion a new direction was given to the proceedings. The little girls, grown used to the knockings, and doubtless feeling bold in the presence of their parents, tried to be "saucy," and Katie suddenly snapped her fingers and called out:—

"Here, Mr. Split-foot, do as I do."

To their great surprise, "Mr. Split-foot" did it! He replied to Katie's snappings with an equal number of raps. Thoroughly enjoying the game, Margaretta joined in. She clapped her hands, crying—"Now do just as I do: count one, two, three, four"—and the raps came, as before. Katie then made a number of motions with her finger and thumb in the air, BUT WITHOUT NOISE, and the invisible rapper amazed them all by giving a corresponding number of knocks, causing Katie to exclaim: "Only look, mother; it can see as well as hear!"

It is easy to imagine their mixed feelings of fear and wonder; for here was AN INTELLIGENCE which seemed like a human intelligence, at work—and there was nobody to be seen. In amazement they racked their brains for an explanation, and at last Katie thought that she had found one:—

"Oh, mother," she said, "I know what it is; to-morrow is April-fool day, and it's somebody trying to fool us."

But Katie was wrong, as they very soon found out. Mrs. Fox thought that, if it was anybody trying to play the fool, she would ask some questions that would quickly put an end to the foolery.

"Count ten," she said, and the raps obeyed.

"How many children have I?" "Seven," was the reply—and at first she thought this was wrong; but the

raps insisting, she remembered that she had six living and one "dead"—it was quite correct. In answer to other questions, the ages of her children were rapped out, with a pause between each sufficiently long to individualise them—until the seventh, at which a longer pause was made, and then three louder raps were given, corresponding to the age of the little one who had died.

Thoroughly roused, now, Mrs. Fox asked further questions. When the answer was in the negative, there were no knocks, but when it was "yes," she was answered with a number of raps. When she asked—"Is this a human being that answers my questions so correctly?"—there was silence; but when she asked—"Is it a spirit? If it is, make two raps"—the two raps were given at once. By using this method, Mrs. Fox learned that the invisible knocker was the spirit of a man, aged 31 years, who had been murdered in that house, and his body buried in the cellar; that his family consisted of a wife and five children, all living at the time of his death—but that his wife had since died.

It may, perhaps, be contended that the children had started the rappings in sport, but if so (and the evidence of the Weekmans contradicts the contention), the answers that had been received to their mother's questions had driven all idea of fun from the little girls' minds, and they now sat up in bed, clinging to each other and trembling in terror. But Mrs. Fox was determined to find out more, and in the presence of witnesses, so she sent Mr. Fox for her nearest neighbour. Mrs. Redfield was a level-headed, out-spoken woman, who didn't believe in ghosts, and she came prepared to laugh. But the pale, fear-stricken faces of the children impressed her, and she began to take the matter seriously. A few questions asked by Mrs. Fox on her behalf were answered correctly, and when her husband was called in, what he heard induced him to call in others, many of whom have signed statements in which the phenomena observed are minutely described.

Mr. William Duesler, who with his father had lived in the house about seven years earlier (1841), arrived about nine o'clock, went straight into the "haunted"

room, and sat on the bed. Mr. Fox was asking questions, and as the raps came in answer, he could feel the jarring of the bedstead under him. Mr. Duesler soon got permission to ask questions, and introduced a variation into the method of asking. If he got no answer to a question, he reversed it. To quote an example from his own signed statement:—

“ I asked if it was an injured spirit, and it rapped. I ask if it had come to hurt anyone who was then present. It did not rap. I then reversed the question and it rapped. I asked if I or my father had injured it, and there was no noise. If we had not injured it (would it) manifest by rapping—and we all heard three distinct raps.”

He then named the several families who had formerly lived in the house, but there was no response till he mentioned the name of John C. Bell, when there sounded three loud raps. Pursuing this method, the following details were obtained, which for the sake of clearness I have attempted to piece together into a connected story. The knocker claimed to be the spirit of a man who had been murdered in the east bedroom about five years before. It was a Tuesday night, and he and Bell were alone in the house, Mrs. Bell (who knew what was going to be done) having gone away with the hired girl during the afternoon. At midnight he was awakened by feeling the murderer at his throat—Bell had attacked him, and was trying to kill him. He struggled hard for his life, but was at last overpowered. His body was then dragged through the pantry and down the stairs to the cellar, where it was allowed to lie till next night, when it was buried in the centre of the cellar to the depth of ten feet. He had brought with him a trunk and pack full of goods, and had in his possession five hundred dollars—and for these he had been done to death.

Mr. Redfield then descended to the cellar, and stood in several positions as directed, but no sound was heard until he stood over the place where the body had been buried, when the rapping commenced—ceasing as soon as he stepped aside.

It will be seen that the above story confirms and

adds to the information obtained earlier by Mrs. Fox.

All attempts to get the murdered man's name were in vain, and at midnight Mr. Duesler went home. But before going he had tested the spirit's reliability in another direction; asking the ages of various people in the room, the number of children in their families, and even the number of deaths that had occurred—the answer in each case being declared correct by the people concerned. His statement (made on 12th April, 1848—less than a fortnight after the occurrences) ends with a declaration that he heard no knockings during the time he lived in the house, and that other tenants who had lived there before the Bells had declared to him that they had never heard any mysterious noises.

Mrs. Fox and the two girls had been taken away to neighbours' houses, but Mr. Fox, Mr. Redfield and a number of others spent the night asking questions and making further inquiries into the identity of the knocker. They obtained the further information (suggested by the mention of a trunk and pack), that the victim had been a pedlar, and no amount of cross-questioning could shake him in his accusation of John C. Bell as the murderer. The party went down to the cellar, and the knocks accompanied them, and indicated the place where the body had been buried, the rappings being given on the spot above the place already pointed out. An attempt was made to find out the spirit's name, through raps, by calling out the letters of the alphabet; the sounds responded to C and B, but it was not till some time later that David Fox succeeded in obtaining the full name of Charles B. Rosna.

* * * *

Thus ends the story of the first phase of the Hydesville knockings. The fulness of the story cannot but give us a very high opinion of the patience and perseverance of these early investigators, and impress us with a realisation of the tremendous amount of trouble they must have taken to obtain information. For instance, the time of the murder was only discovered by naming every hour of the day, the raps coming at the mention of "mid-

night." To them must be accorded all honour, especially as thus earnestly and patiently they laboured, not realising as yet that they were enacting the first scene of a new Act in the eternal Drama of Life and Death.

CHAPTER III. FURTHER EXPERIENCES.

News of the rappings quickly travelled far and wide, and on Saturday, 1st April, the house was filled to overflowing with crowds of curious spectators who had come to see and hear for themselves. But there were no sounds during that day, and they did not commence again till about seven o'clock in the evening. When Mr. Duesler called on Saturday night there were about three hundred people present, and all who could get within hearing distance asked the usual questions about ages, size of families, etc. It is claimed that to the hundreds of questions not a single incorrect answer was given.

On Sunday, 2nd April, knocks were for the first time heard during the day, but they ceased in the evening and were not heard again during the night, when Mrs. Fox's son David, and her son-in-law Stephen Smith, with their wives, slept in the haunted room. Between one and two o'clock on Sunday afternoon, when Mr. Duesler paid his third visit, there were from three to five hundred people present. He went into the cellar with several others, and nobody was allowed to stop in the room overhead. He then asked that, if a man had been buried in the cellar, the fact should be announced by rapping, or some other noise or sign. The moment the question was asked, there was a sound like the falling of a stick about a foot long and half an inch square on the floor of the bedroom above. It did not seem to rebound at all; there was only one sound. Stephen Smith was at once sent up to examine the room and see if he could discover the cause. He returned to say that he could discover nothing; there was nobody in the room or in that part of the house. Two more questions were asked, and answered in the usual way, and the party went back up-stairs and made a thorough search, but could find nothing to explain the noise.

Mr. Duesler then got a knife and fork, and tried if he could make the same noise by dropping them, but found that he couldn't. And as there is only a single thickness of floor between the bedroom and the cellar, he was convinced that nothing capable of making the noise could have been hidden.

On Monday night he paid his last visit; heard the same noises; asked the same questions as before; received the same answers—and went away unable to account in any way for the noises that he and others had heard, and forced to admit that he had stumbled on a mystery which he was unable to solve.

There was one point in the story of the alleged pedlar that could be put to immediate test, and that was the claim that his body had been buried in the centre of the cellar. At least, so thought these early investigators, and on Monday night, 3rd April, David Fox, with the aid of some friends, started digging. But the house was built on low ground, and near a stream at that time greatly swollen by the winter rains; the ground as a result was waterlogged, and three feet down they found so much water that the digging had to be stopped. In the summer of 1848, however, when the ground was dry, the digging was started again—and on this occasion they found a plank, a vacant place or hole, some bits of crockery which seemed to be parts of a wash-bowl, traces of charcoal, quicklime, some human hair, bones (declared on examination by a surgeon to be human bones) and a portion of a human skull.

The discovery was not conclusive, and could hardly be held to prove the truth of the pedlar's story, but the presence of the human remains *did* prove that some human body had been buried there, and the charcoal and lime argued that an attempt had been made to dispose of the body. More than that, however, could not logically be inferred.

* * * *

For some weeks the Fox family continued to live at their cottage—and there was no cessation of the phenomena. It was soon observed that the spirits seemed to se-

lect, or require the presence of, the two young girls for the production of the sounds; and though these had been made without them, especially on the night of 31st March—when all the members of the family but Mr. Fox were absent from the house—still, as they began to make closer observation of the manifestations of the invisible power, it became clear that these were more powerful with Kate, the youngest daughter, than with anyone else.

But answering questions was not the only phase of the manifestations, which now seemed to take a violent turn, and at night became terrifying and nerve-racking. The furniture frequently moved about; the girls were often touched by hard cold hands; doors were opened and shut with violence; their beds were so violently shaken that they were obliged to "camp out," as they termed it, on the floor; their bed clothes were dragged from them, and the very floor and house made to shake as in an earthquake. Night after night they would be appalled by hearing all the sounds of a death-struggle: the gurgling of the throat, a sudden thud as of something falling, the dragging as of a helpless body across the room and down the cellar stairs, the sound of digging, the nailing of boards, and the filling up as of a new-made grave. (See "History of Modern American Spiritualism.")

As the spirit had managed to set up communication these later manifestations may seem unnecessary and callously inconsiderate, but a satisfactory reason may appear later. Whatever the reason, the result was that the strain became greater than human nature could bear. Also, in addition to their terrible nightly experiences, the Foxes were continually being pestered by curious inquirers and sight-seers, who invaded the house at all times and absolutely prevented the family from getting either rest or peace. Even a machine could not have withstood such a constant strain, and the Foxes were not machines, they were just human beings. So at last David Fox prevailed on his parents and sisters to leave the haunted homestead and live with him on his farm—and here for the present we must leave them.

CHAPTER IV. CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE.

The foregoing chapters have dealt entirely with the knockings, and the story obtained from the invisible Knocker. Had we nothing further to work from, the belief in spirit return and communication would rest (as far as Hydesville is concerned) on very frail foundations. All that Wm. Duesler could conclude from the knockings, after a careful and painstaking investigation, was that they were not produced by trickery—"they were very mysterious and he could not account for them." Even the story of the alleged pedlar did not suggest anything to him. The story itself was obtained by asking leading questions to some of which the Knocker rapped assent—not a very satisfactory method; and when what seemed to be the vital part of the story was put to the test, the expected skeleton was not found. The human bones and hair might have belonged to quite another body, and might have been lying there for fifty instead of between four and five years—they proved nothing, beyond what has already been pointed out. It may be that the rehearsal night after night of the crime episode was an attempt from the spirit side to illustrate the story, and so make up for other deficiencies—or it may only have been an illusion, due to the high nervous tension to which the Foxes had been worked up, what with lack of rest, the terror of their experiences, and the horror of what, it was claimed, had happened in their bedroom. Be that as it may, the whole affair was unsatisfactory.

Corroboration of the story, however, came from unexpected quarters. Wm. Duesler had hunted up various people who had lived in the house before 1843, and they all declared that they had never heard any mysterious noises. But he also found a tenant who had inhabited the house between the departure of the Bells and the arrival of the Foxes, and this tenant and his wife and servant came forward with remarkable stories.

The Weekmans had lived in the house for eighteen months in 1846-47, and were frequently startled by the rappings and other noises, of which they often, and

vainly, tried to find the cause. One evening, just as he was preparing for bed, Mr. Weekman heard a rapping on the outside door; but, to his surprise, when he opened the door he found nobody there. He stepped out and looked around, as he thought it must be somebody trying to play a trick on him; but he could not see anyone, so he went back into the house. After a short time he heard the rapping again, and took hold of the door-latch, to find out if anyone was using that method of annoying him. The rapping being repeated, he opened the door instantly, but there was nobody in sight. Dashing out, he went right round the house, but could neither see nor find any trace of an intruder. Yet, as he stated in April, 1848, when the raps came as he held the latch he could distinctly feel the jarring of the door!

The Weekmans were often, of a night, disturbed by loud noises, and sometimes they heard the sound of someone walking in the cellar (it will be remembered that there was only a single thickness of boarding between the cellar and the room above). Their little daughter slept in the room where the noises were heard, and one night she woke them all by screaming very loudly. On rushing into the room they found her sitting up in bed, crying and screaming—and it was some time before she was calm enough to tell them that something had been moving around her, and over her head and face; that it was cold, and she had felt it all over her. That was between twelve and one o'clock, so the parents took the child (she was only eight years of age) into their bed; and it was a long time before they could get her to consent to sleeping in her own bed again.

On another occasion, when Mrs. Weekman was away, her husband was awakened by hearing his name called. Supposing that someone wanted him, he sat up in bed for some time, but he heard no more and could never find out who or what had called him. This experience, and that of his little girl, might have been put down as being merely vivid dreams, had they not been borne out by the experiences of the Foxes, and the clairvoyant vision (as it afterwards turned out to be) of Mrs. Lape, the Weekmans' servant. One day, while she was working

in the kitchen, she was startled by seeing a man in the adjoining bedroom. She had been in the kitchen a long time, and, as there was only the one door in the bedroom, she knew that nobody could have gone in there without being seen by her. The man, who was a complete stranger to her, was of medium size, and was dressed in a black frock coat, light trousers, and a cloth cap. He stood facing her as she looked into the bedroom, but did not speak, nor did she hear any noise at the time. She rushed off to find Mrs. Weekman, who was busy in another part of the house, but by the time they returned the mysterious stranger had disappeared. Mrs. Weekman thought it was somebody trying to frighten her, but she persisted in thinking that the appearance was supernatural—though she had never believed in such things until her own experience. Truly, experience teaches!

It is a pity that Mrs. Lape did not stand her ground, and call Mrs. Weekman, instead of running to find her—but regrets are vain, and we must take things as they actually happened.

These stories add an air of probability to the claims of the invisible knocker; but even more remarkable evidence was forthcoming. It will be remembered that in the pedlar's story mention was made of the hired girl who left the house with Mrs. Bell. That girl, whose name was Lucretia Pulver, still lived in the neighbourhood with her mother; and when the murder story spread abroad they presented themselves, and made statements of which the following is a summary:—

Lucretia, who was about fifteen years old at the time, had lived with Mr. and Mrs. Bell for about three months in the winter of 1843-44, first as a hired girl, and afterwards as a boarder; and it was during this latter period that she first heard the noises, and after she had been dismissed in a surprising manner by Mrs. Bell, only to be invited back in three days' time. But we had better take the story in its proper order.

One day, about two in the afternoon, a pedlar called at the house. He was a man about thirty years of age, dressed in a black coat and light trousers, and carried a trunk and (as far as Lucretia could remember) a basket.

He was claimed as an old acquaintance by Mrs. Bell, and she and he held a long conversation, in which he seemed to be telling her of his personal affairs. Soon after, Mrs. Bell called Lucretia and told her that she could not afford to keep her any longer; adding that, as she herself was going to Loch Berlin (a neighbouring village) to spend the night, if Lucretia would pack her clothes at once they could both go away together. Before leaving, Lucretia had a look at the pedlar's stock of goods, and saw some things which she would have liked to buy; but she had no money, so the pedlar promised her that he would call at her home the next morning. She and Mrs. Bell then left the house, and Mr. Bell and the pedlar remained behind. The pedlar did not call at her home next day, and she never saw him again.

Three days afterwards, Mrs. Bell invited Lucretia to come and board with her, and go to school. But after a week she asked the girl to leave school and do housework for her, saying that she had to alter a couple of coats for her husband, as they were too large for him, and out of fashion. They were ripped to pieces when Lucretia first saw them. It was about this time that Mrs. Bell gave her a thimble, which she said she had bought from the pedlar.

It was after her return that the girl first heard the noises—under the foot of her bed. Then one night, when Mr. and Mrs. Bell were away at Loch Berlin, she sent for her little brother and a girl friend named Amelia Losey to sleep with her. The boy was asleep when the girls went to bed about eleven, but they were still awake when the clock struck midnight. Suddenly they heard a sound as of a man walking through the pantry, down the stairs and half-way across the cellar—where the footsteps ceased. As may be imagined, they were very much frightened, and got up and fastened the windows and doors. They felt safer after that, but even then were so nervous that they got very little sleep for the rest of the night.

One day, about a week after the pedlar's visit, Lucretia had occasion to go down into the cellar, and walking across it, sank knee deep in a quantity of loose earth in the centre of the floor. She was so startled that she

screamed. On Mrs. Bell asking her for the reason of her screaming, she in turn asked what Mr. Bell had been doing in the cellar. Mrs. Bell laughed, and said it was only where the rats had been working in the ground. But a night or two after this Mr. Bell carried some earth into the cellar, and was at work for some time "filling up the rat-holes."

After a time Lucretia left the Bell's, but occasionally visited them. On one occasion Mrs. Bell told her that the pedlar had been there again, and showed her another thimble and some other things which she claimed to have bought.

Lucretia couldn't make up her mind what to think of the noises—even after she had heard the story obtained from the Knocker. Mr. and Mrs. Bell appeared to her to be very good people, only that they were rather quick tempered. But she mentioned that the Bells' dog seemed to sense something wrong, for it would sit under the bedroom window and howl all the night long.

Lucretia was not the only one who heard the noises, for one day Mrs. Pulver, who was a frequent visitor at the house, found Mrs. Bell quite ill from want of rest, and on enquiring the reason, was informed by Mrs. Bell that she didn't know whether she had "the fidgets" or what, but she could hear someone walking about the house all night, and was "sick of her life."

A few months after these events the Bells left the neighbourhood.

* * * *

Perhaps it would be as well to state here how these statements were obtained. The details were first put on record on 11th April, 1848, in the Fox Cottage at Hydesville, by Mr. E. E. Lewis, of Canandaigua, New York. He called on that day, and interviewed the members of the Fox family, and about twenty of their neighbours; the statements made were at once taken down in writing, read over to those who had made them, and then signed. Mrs. Fox and Lucretia Pulver declared their readiness to repeat their statements under oath. Those summarised above are typical of all, and contain all that the other witnesses declared. Mr. Lewis collected the statements into

a pamphlet, which was published in May, 1848. So Wm. Duesler's very valuable statement was made a week after his last experiment, and whilst the details were still fresh in his mind, as were those of the Foxes and the other neighbours. It will be observed that the accounts of the Pulvers and the Weekmans are not so clear about dates—but they were made about four years and one year after the events described; a point which we must remember when examining the evidence.

But Mr. Lewis's was not the only statement of the facts, although it is most important as being the earliest. Other pamphlets were issued—by D. M. Dewey (1850), Dr. J. B. Campbell (1851), and E. W. Capron—and the foregoing account is a blend of them all. It will be seen that the story is not about something that was said to have happened fifty or a hundred years before the story was written, but is an account of things that were happening even as the historians were recording them.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY EVENTS IN ROCHESTER.

Mrs. Fox's eldest daughter Leah (then Mrs. Fish, but better known by her later name of Underhill) was a music teacher in the town of Rochester, New York State, and amongst her numerous pupils were the daughters of a printer named Little. During a lesson one day early in May, 1848, Mr. Little came into the room with (peculiar coincidence) the proof-sheets of the pamphlet (already mentioned) prepared by Mr. Lewis of Canandaigua. On learning who Mrs. Fish was, he placed the proof-sheets in her hands, and thus (according to her own account) for the first time she heard of what had been happening at Hydesville. That night she set out for home, but on arriving there she found the old homestead deserted—her people had gone to live at her brother David's farm. There she went, and found the knockings still in full force, the knockers having evidently broken their connection with the cottage, and attached themselves to the Foxes.

In the hope of baffling the knockers and stopping the knockings by separating the sisters, Mrs. Fish took

her mother and Katie back with her to Rochester, leaving Margaretta with David. But the knockings continued, in the presence of each sister, and eventually Margaretta was sent to join Katie.

In Rochester the method of communication was changed, with remarkable results. Hitherto, the communicators could only give *yes* or *no* answers to such questions as the investigators thought of asking. But at the suggestion of Isaac Post, a Quaker friend, the alphabetic code now in general use was adopted. Then, to the unspeakable joy of the investigators, numerous friends of the family, and of those who joined in the communications, came spelling out their names, their ages, and various proofs of identity correctly, and gave direct and unlooked-for tests of their presence. Also, investigation assumed a new phase, for under spirit instructions development circles were formed, and several clairaudient and clairvoyant mediums were developed.

One of the first communications under the new code asserted that the manifestations would not be confined to the Fox family, but would spread all over the world—a prophecy which has now been practically fulfilled. The spirits who now took charge of the operations explained that the communication was produced through a blending of physical and spiritual magnetism; that mediumship depended on the possession of this magnetism; that “conditions” could easily be upset by lack of harmony—and announced that the system had been planned by scientific minds in the spirit life, amongst whom Dr. Benjamin Franklin was claimed as playing a prominent part.

It would be expected that spirit communication would now be an easy and pleasant thing—but it wasn’t. As the news spread, the Foxes, instead of being hailed as the instruments of a new revelation, found themselves the objects of derision and persecution; and Mrs. Fish lost most of her pupils. A number of “reverend gentlemen” took the lead in persecuting the family. At first, the Foxes being highly respected members of the Methodist Church, several of the local clergy called and joined with the family in praying that what was still regarded as a curse would be taken away from them. But although the spirits

treated these exercises with all reverence, and even rapped in chorus with the "amens," they refused to be persuaded to go away—and the clergy then accused the Foxes of being in league with the Devil: the invariable resort of bigotry and superstitious ignorance. There were some notable exceptions, particularly the Rev. A. H. Jervis and the Rev. Charles Hammond, who investigated and received proofs (independently of the Foxes) in their own homes—but the general attitude of the churches was such that "the rappers" found themselves to all intents and purposes excommunicated, and deprived of all spiritual consolation in their heavy trial.

Several other wealthy and influential families, in Rochester and the neighbouring towns, began to experience spiritual phenomena in their own homes—but this, instead of making things easier for the persecuted family, only seemed to make things worse; for such was the state of the public mind that the Foxes were in some way regarded as frauds and as the cause of trouble to unoffending people!

Some little time after the family had moved to Rochester, Katie was removed to the home of Mr. E. W. Capron, at Auburn, but the phenomena continued through the (apparent) mediumship of Margaretta. In vain the family—whose early joy in the communications had been turned into sorrow—accompanied by resentment towards the prime causes of all their present troubles—implored the spirits to depart. Instead, they in their turn began to urge the family and their friends to hold a public meeting. We can imagine how this request was received. What?—go out and *look* for trouble, when so much trouble was coming unsought? As could only be expected, they refused; and then the spirits adopted a new tone and, in November, 1848, threatened that, if a public meeting was not held, they would abandon the circle, and seek some other means of public demonstration. Of course, the Fox family were only too glad to hear this, and were thereby strengthened in their refusal. They would NOT go out in public; so at last the spirits fulfilled their threat, and went away, to the family's great delight.

But once the spirits had gone, everything seemed

different—the house seemed to be deserted; the very air felt empty; there was a general feeling that they had all lost dear friends—and very soon delight was changed to regrets, and the circle began to long for the return of those they had so gladly sent away. But it was all in vain. There was no response to their pleadings till, at the end of twelve days, Mr. Capron's request for the re-opening of communications was answered by a shower of raps. The joy of the circle was unbounded, and so severe had been their lesson, and so great was their fear that continued refusals would mean the final departure of their spirit friends, that they at last consented to do whatever the spirits should desire.

After several rehearsals, the first public demonstration of Spiritualism was given in the Corinthian Hall, Rochester, on November 14th, 1849. Mr. Capron related the full story of the manifestations, and although Margaretta was the only acknowledged medium on the platform (Mrs. Fish's mediumship not having been, at that time, discovered—and Katie being at Auburn), the lecturer's remarks were punctuated by clear and distinct raps. At its close, a committee of five leading citizens was formed to test the medium, and report to a second meeting on the 15th. So certain were the opposition that fraud would be detected, that the *Rochester Democrat* had ready in type an article announcing "the entire explosion of the rapping humbug"—but the article could not be published, for to everyone's surprise the committee's report was favourable. In the forenoon Mrs. Fish and Margaretta were taken to the hall of the Sons of Temperance, where raps were heard on the floor near the ladies, and on the wall behind some of the committee. Some questions were asked, the answers being "not altogether right or altogether wrong." In the afternoon, in a private house, raps were heard on the outside of the front door, after they had entered, and on the door of a cupboard. After searching tests the committee agreed that the sounds were heard, but that they had entirely failed to discover any means by which they could be produced.

The report did not satisfy the audience of the second meeting, so a second committee was appointed, to report

to a third meeting on the 16th. The investigation was held at the office of Councillor Whittlesey (a member of the committee), "to avoid all possibility of deception"; but the sounds were heard on the floors, the chairs, the tables, and, in fact, everywhere. Dr. Langworthy (another member) tested the possibility of ventriloquism by the stethoscope, and the committee reported that "the sounds were heard, and their thorough investigation had conclusively shown them to be produced neither by machinery nor ventriloquism, though what the agent was they were unable to determine."

This favourable report was rejected by the third audience, and yet another committee of five, with a committee of three ladies, was appointed to test the mediums and report to a fourth meeting on the evening of the 17th. This committee was appointed "to expose the trickery," and its members certainly did their best—the mediums' clothing being thoroughly searched, even to their shoes, stockings, and under-garments. They were made to stand with bare feet on pillows, glass, and other supposed electrical non-conductors, but the ladies had to report that "when they were standing on pillows, with a handkerchief tied around the bottom of their dresses, tight to the ankles, they all heard the rapping on the wall and floor distinctly"—to which the men added that "they had heard the sounds, and failed utterly to discover their origin. They had proved that neither machinery nor imposture had been used, and their questions, many of them being mental, had been answered correctly."

This would have satisfied most people, but the fourth audience was composed of a choice set of rowdies, of all classes of the population. They didn't want to hear the truth—what they had attended to hear was that the mediums were frauds; and when the committee "disappointed" them they at once began to make trouble. One of the audience distributed fireworks, which were let off, creating wild confusion, and a riotous gang attempted to rush the platform. Matters became so serious that George Willetts, a Quaker, sprang forward declaring that they would only reach the mediums over his dead

body—and at last the police had to interfere and guard the mediums to their homes.

Thus ended the first public demonstration of Spiritualism and thus a bigoted community tried to obscure the light of hope that was struggling to break through the dark clouds of sorrow and affliction.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVIDENCE EXAMINED.

It may reasonably be pointed out that the large array of certified facts now in the possession of the Spiritualist Movement makes it immaterial whether the early phenomena were fraudulent or not, as the truth of Spirit return and Spirit communication has been proved by thousands of investigators. But while this is so, we must bear in mind that these phenomena were the beginnings of our Modern Movements; and as charges of fraud have been levelled against the mediums concerned, it is only right that, in a history of the Knockings, these charges should be met and either admitted or disproved.

We shall first consider the Knockings, which could only have been caused in one of two ways—(A) by physical agency or (B) by super-physical agency. The physical agents could have been (1) the Fox sisters, (2) other members of the Fox family, or (3) some of the neighbours. *Re* (1), it is on record that Margaretta Fox, on more than one occasion, confessed that she and her sister had produced the rappings—but it is also on record that after each “confession” she fervently protested that they had not! It was also argued that the knocks were produced by dislocations of the knee-joints—but this would only produce one unvarying sound, and would not account for the sounds of footsteps, of a struggle, or of digging. Besides, the knocks were heard in the cellar on the night of 31st March, when Mrs. Fox and the girls were not in the house; nor could the sisters have been responsible for the noises heard by the Weekmans and Lucretia Pulver, or complained of by Mrs. Bell. *Re* (2) the cellar incident

narrows the search down to Mr. Fox. (It is worthy of note here that no noises were heard on the night when David Fox and three others slept in the haunted room.) But in the cellar, everyone was looking for the cause of the noises, and it is questionable whether Mr. Fox could have produced them without being instantly detected. Further, when Wm. Duesler was investigating, the precautions he took were all against successful fraud. Finally, with regard to the possibility (3) of the noises being produced by neighbours with a peculiar sense of humour—the fact that until Sunday, 2nd April, the noises were only heard at night would seem to lend some degree of credibility to such a suggestion; but on 31st March and 1st April the house was surrounded by large crowds, and on 2nd April about four hundred were present when the noises were heard in broad daylight. And in all three sections we must remember that searching questions were asked and correct answers received—and no variety of bone-dislocation could account for this fact, as the questions were all mainly personal, and the Foxes or a “joker” couldn’t very well have learned the ages and family history of all the inhabitants of Hydesville and its neighbourhood for miles around—and been able to produce each as required on the spur of the moment. Besides, the Foxes had been in the neighbourhood less than four months. Considering the crudeness of the code of communication, the exact knowledge manifested was very impressive.

In an investigation such as this, the character of the Fox family should be taken into consideration. We find that the Foxes were highly respected members of the Methodist Church—so much so that at first the clergymen of Rochester combined with them in praying for the removal of “the curse” which oppressed them. Our first consideration, then, is—was it worth while for them to lose the respect of the Christian community in order to make claims to a “faked” communication in which nobody believed? The fact that Mrs. Fox’s hair turned gray in a single week, as the result of the persecution in Rochester would seem to suggest that she at least was not enjoying the situation; and Mrs. Fish’s loss of music

pupils could hardly be put down to a successful career of fraud. To this we must add the earnest prayers of the Foxes that the "obsessing" spirits might be driven away—and their delight in November, 1848, when the spirits left them. Also we must remember the terror of the girls on March 31st, which impressed not only their mother but Mrs. Redfield. Finally, the public character of Mr. and Mrs. Fox makes it hard to imagine them as conniving at the carrying out of such a heartless fraud.

When considering records of investigations, and trying to find their evidential value, we must take into account the precautions against fraud adopted by the investigators. Leaving aside what may be called the first public presentation of the early knockings—when large crowds assembled, and their members were well satisfied with the evidential information given, we may confine ourselves to the investigation undertaken by Wm. Duesler. His record of his experiences has already been given very fully, so it is only necessary to concentrate on one or two points. It was he who improved the code of communication, by reversing his questions when he received no answer. By this means he obtained the first complete account from the invisible knocker—and this confirmed the partial account already obtained by Mrs. Fox. On the Sunday his investigations were marked by great thoroughness, and he noted the fact that there was only one thickness of flooring between the bedroom and the cellar, so that an instrument capable of making the noises could not have been concealed. Although his declared decision was somewhat negative, he was at least convinced that, whatever the cause of the knocks, they had not been produced by any physical means that could be detected.

The statements of the Pulvers and the Weekmans are important as corroboration of the stories told by the Foxes and the unseen knocker. Lucretia Pulver's description of the pedlar agrees with Mrs. Lape's clairvoyant vision; but the weakness in Mrs. Lape's story is that she left the kitchen to look for Mrs. Weekman, and therefore could not swear that what she saw was not a physical intruder who made his escape during her absence. However, the

coincidence in description is worthy of note. And the accounts of the knocks heard discount any suspicion of fraud on the part of the Foxes. Further, Mr. Fox's experiences with the door coincide with those of Mr. Weekman, with the important addition that when Mr. and Mrs. Fox stood on opposite sides of the door, they heard the knocks on the door between them. The dog incident recorded by Lucretia is also important, as dogs have been known to howl when a death occurred in the house to which they were attached—and animals are clairvoyant.

The pedlar's story is the weakest part of the entire account. He declared that he had been murdered about five years previous—but the dates given (the winter of 1843-44 and March, 1848) don't allow much more than four years. Again, there is no account of his orphan children ever having been brought forward, and it could easily be claimed that, had they existed, the publicity given to the story would have led to their being produced. Further, the story was contradicted in person by John C. Bell, the alleged murderer, who came from Lyon, N.Y. (where he had been living since 1846), armed with a certificate of good character signed by forty-four inhabitants of Lyon, who "believed him to be a man of upright and honest life, and incapable of committing the crime of which he was suspected." Lucretia Pulver also certified that "Mr. and Mrs. Bell appeared to be very good folks." Bell's supporters were also able to point to cases where other missing persons—said to have been murdered—had reappeared afterwards. But the apparently weakest point of all was the attempt to locate the position of the grave. When digging took place at the spot indicated, human remains were certainly found, but no evidence whatever to connect them with the alleged pedlar.

The reproduction of the murder episode has already been considered, and it is noteworthy that the episode was reproduced to a circle in Rochester (See "Modern American Spiritualism"), and has been reproduced since to circles sitting in the old cottage of Hydesville (See "Hydesville in History").

The final phase of the early demonstration was at Rochester, when the Fox sisters, and the phenomena pro-

duced through their mediumship, were put to the test of public and private examination. The details have already been described, so it is only necessary here to point out that, under the most rigid test conditions, raps on walls, etc., were heard all over the Corinthian Hall, whilst the mediums were on the platform; that, in private, mental questions were correctly answered, the use of insulators did not in any way interfere with the production of phenomena, and it was certified by Dr. Langworthy that the various sounds were not produced by ventriloquism. In the words of the Committee, "they had heard the sounds, and failed utterly to discover their origin; they had proved that neither machinery nor imposture had been used, and their questions, many of them being mental, were correctly answered."

It is for us to see if we can do what the Committees failed to do, and discover the origin of the phenomena.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GRAVE GIVES UP ITS DEAD!

The following extracts are from the papers published at the time and are given without present comment:—

FROM THE "BOSTON JOURNAL," OF NOV. 23, 1904.

Rochester, N.Y., Nov. 22, 1904.—The skeleton of the man supposed to have caused the rappings first heard by the Fox sisters in 1848 has been found in the walls of the house occupied by the sisters, and clears them from the only shadow of doubt held concerning their sincerity in the discovery of spirit communication.

The Fox sisters declared they learned to communicate with the spirit of a man, and that he told them he had been murdered and buried in the cellar. Repeated excavations failed to locate the body and thus give proof positive of their story.

The discovery was made by school children playing in the cellar of the building in Hydesville known as the "Spook House," where the Fox sisters heard the wonderful rappings. William H. Hyde, a reputable citizen of Clyde, who owns the house, made an investigation and found an almost entire human skeleton between the earth and crumbling cellar walls, undoubtedly that of the wan-

dering pedlar who it was claimed was murdered in the east room of the house, and whose body was hidden in the cellar.

Mr. Hyde has notified relatives of the Fox sisters, and the notice of the discovery will be sent to the National Order of Spiritualists, many of whom remember having made pilgrimages to the "Spook House," as it is commonly called. The finding of the bones practically corroborates the sworn statement made by Margaret Fox, April 11th, 1848. The Fox sisters claimed to have been disturbed by rappings and finally by a system of signals got into communication with the spirit.

According to Margaret Fox's statement the spirit was that of a pedlar who described how he had been murdered in the house, his body being buried in the cellar. There were numerous witnesses to the rappings, but although the cellar had been dug up many times no traces of the body were found until the crumbling cellar walls revealed the skeleton.

The name of the murdered man, according to this revelation to the Fox sisters, was Charles Rosna, and the murderer a man named Bell. In 1847 the house was occupied by Michael Weekman, a poor labourer. He and his family became troubled by these mysterious rappings, which followed in succession at different intervals, especially during the night. The family became so broken by fear and loss of sleep that they vacated the house. On December 11, the Fox family moved in and two months later the rappings were resumed and the family became frightened. Finally Margaret and Cathie grew bold and asked questions which were answered, revealing the murder.

* * * *

FROM THE "SUNFLOWER," DEC., 1904.

The following bit of information was transmitted hitherward which, if confirmed, will create additional interest in Spiritualism, although by no means confirming the latter, as that does not rest exclusively on the phenomena at Hydesville; for since then we have had many additional phenomena, as the varied physical phases, materialisation, slate-writing, and drawing, painting, levi-

iation, passing of matter through matter, trance-speaking, clairvoyance, psychometric reading, and numerous other modes of communicating with the spirit world. The correspondent says:—William H. Hyde, who recently found the arm and leg bones of a human being at the old Fox homestead, made another search in the cellar where the bones were first exposed by the caving in of the inside cellar wall. Mr. Hyde discovered all the other important bones except the skull. The latter corroborates the statement as made in the history of the first rappings, a work entitled "The Missing Link in Spiritualism."

(Note by Editor.—Attention is drawn to the fact that a portion of the skull (which the foregoing report declares to be missing) was discovered during the digging operations at the time of the "Knockings" —1848.)

* * * *

FROM "HYDESVILLE IN HISTORY," 1917.

I am indebted to Mrs. M. E. Cadwallader's splendid little book, "Hydesville in History," for the following extracts from P.L.O.A. Keeler's account of the finding of the pedlar's remains in the cellar at Hydesville:—

" It is a matter of history how excavation followed excavation, the men of the neighbourhood eagerly volunteering the digging, going all over the floor to a great depth, this being frequently repeated by other workers covering several years. But these careful examinations failed to substantiate the constant assertions of the spirit, for they revealed no indication whatever of a hidden body. It is a regrettable fact that both Mr. and Mrs. Fox and their three noted daughters passed from mortal life before this mystery was solved. . . .

" Only a very few years ago the east wall of the cellar caved in, revealing an inferior piece of construction, but, stranger than all it entirely hid from view back of it the original and still standing outer wall of this cottage cellar. This inner wall was, of course, invisible on the outside, and would not be observed on the inside unless there had been something to specially attract attention to it, and measurements made of the length of the cellar on both the inside and outside. The stones with which this addi-

tional wall was built corresponded with those used in constructing (adjacent) fences or dividing lines, and could easily have been made use of unnoticed by the not-near neighbours. Between these two walls was exhumed, long after the decease of the Fox family, the perfect skeleton of a man and a tin pedlar's pack such as was carried by itinerant salesmen in those days. Comment is unnecessary. And the statement adhered to so persistently by the manifesting spirit of the pedlar, that his body was buried in that cellar, was absolutely verified."

* * * *

The Fox Cottage was purchased by Mr. B. F. Bartlett, of Cambridge, Mass., and moved to Lily Dale, New York, during the month of April, 1916, as a matter of preservation, and as a memorial to Spiritualism and the Fox sisters.

The furniture includes the tin trunk carried by the pedlar at the time of the murder, and dug up with the skeleton in 1904.

CHAPTER VIII. THE SUMMING UP.

The finding of the skeleton puts a new value on the evidence of the pedlar, which till then was without sufficient corroboration. We may disregard the discrepancy in time—after all there is not so much difference between "over four" and "about five" years, especially as the Knocker was only estimating time, as spirits do. There may be several reasons why the children were not produced—"Rosna" might have been a "business" name; or the children, after the death of their mother, may have been removed to some remote part of the country, whither news would travel slowly, if at all; or their guardians may have hesitated to bring them forward in a matter of such fierce controversy. And the wrong description of the burial place may admit of explanation. The first digging proved that a human body had been buried in the place indicated—the finding of the bones and part of the skull suggests that it was the skeleton which was removed, and built-in with stones from the fence. The pedlar was aware of the first burial, but most probably was not "in touch"

when the skeleton was removed. The finding of the tin pedlar's pack also serves to connect the remains found with the story told to Mrs. Fox and Wm. Duesler.

All the circumstances point to John C. Bell as the murderer. We must take into account the good character given to the Bells by Lucretia Pulver and the citizens of Lyon—but it seems beyond all doubt that in this instance the Bells were tempted, and fell. Let us review the incidents of the fatal day: the pedlar arrived, and talked over his private affairs with Mrs. Bell; Mrs. Bell and Lucretia left Mr. Bell and the pedlar alone for the night—and the pedlar was never seen again. It must be admitted, also, that Mrs. Bell's excuse for dismissing Lucretia is very unsatisfactory when we remember that within a fortnight the girl was back again on the old footing.

Mrs. Lape's clairvoyant vision agrees with Lucretia's description of the pedlar—and although Mrs. Lape could not tell how the "man" got out of the house, she was certain that he could not have got into the bedroom without having been seen by her—had he been "physical." If we couple these facts with the noises which terrified Mrs. Bell, and the persistent howling of the dog under the bedroom window—both happening after the visit of the pedlar—we can arrive at only one conclusion.

We must now consider the phenomena, and whether they were fraudulently produced. Margaretta Fox's "confessions" do not affect the issue, for at Auburn, Hydesville, and elsewhere the knockings were produced in her absence. The same may be said of Mr. Fox, who, it will be remembered, was the only member of the family present when the knocks were produced during the night of 31st March. Further, on the Sunday, with such a crowd present, and in full daylight, it would have been impossible to carry out such a deception without detection—particularly when we consider the number and accuracy of the "tests" asked for and obtained. Finally the sufferings of the Foxes, and their joy when they thought that at last the "obsessing spirits" had left them in peace, seem to point to the conclusion that the knockings were not produced by them.

The only doubt that can possibly linger is whether,

during investigation, the precautions taken by the investigators were sufficiently thorough; but it is only necessary to read the preceding chapters to become convinced that nothing could have been more thorough than the precautions taken both by Wm. Duesler and the committees at Rochester. Regarding the latter, Mrs. Britten complains bitterly of the unnecessary severity of some of the conditions laid down. No precaution was neglected, and yet the phenomena were produced, to the consternation of those who had set out to "expose how it was done." Instead they were convinced that no fraud had been used, and that the knockings were not produced by any physical means. In other words, they were forced to admit that the phenomena were super-physical, and that an invisible intelligence was at work, not only in producing knocks, but in correctly answering questions which had not been put into spoken words.

Having carefully considered all the evidence, we are entitled to pronounce our verdict, and to claim that, on a certain afternoon in the winter of 1843-44, a pedlar who called himself Charles B. Rosna called at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Bell in Hydesville; that during the night he was murdered by Mr. Bell; that his body was buried along with lime and charcoal, in the centre of the cellar; that his skeleton was afterwards removed to the roughly constructed tomb against the cellar wall; that the memory of his wrongs chained the pedlar to the house; and that, on the evening of 31st March, 1848, the barriers to communication were at last broken down, and while in the cellar lay all that was left of the murdered body, in the bedroom upstairs the wronged spirit was telling his story to a startled woman and two frightened little girls—through whom it has been communicated to the world.

CHAPTER IX.

EARLY AMERICAN INVESTIGATORS.

Although some of the inhabitants of Rochester were unwilling either to investigate the claims of the Fox family or allow others to investigate, there were others who braved the fury of the bigoted rabble, and conducted investigations in their own homes. In many cases the Foxes

were the mediums, but in others it was discovered that members of the family concerned were the possessors of psychic gifts, and many convincing proofs of spirit power and spirit communication were obtained. And as the fame of the sisters spread, many eminent men of other cities investigated the phenomena and were convinced of their genuineness. Nor did the spirit communicators confine themselves to raps and similar noises. The pedlar, having played his part in "breaking through," would now seem to have retired (except for special occasions) into the background, and the organisers themselves to have taken charge. As a result, practically every phase of phenomena now known was produced, and appeal was made to every class and standard of intelligence.

Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, in "Modern American Spiritualism" (published in 1870), gives an entertaining and instructive account of the fortunes of Spiritualism in America during the twenty years following "the Knockings," and it is from her records that the incidents quoted in this and the two following chapters have been culled. It will be impossible to give an account of all the "tests" received by these early investigators. The most that can be done is to introduce the eminent persons who took part in the investigations, and were convinced of spirit communication, giving, where occasion warrants, a brief summary of their methods or their principal experiences.

It will be remembered that, at the time of the Corinthian Hall meetings, Catherine Fox was not in Rochester. Mr. E. W. Capron, of Auburn, had persuaded Mrs. Fox to allow Katie to live at his home; and through her mediumship most of the inhabitants of Auburn were enabled to study the phenomena under conditions which prevented any possibility of deception. Yet (we are told) "Spirit music was produced; hands were seen, felt and even examined, forming and melting apparently in the clasp that held them; messages of affection, timely warning and prescient intelligence were constantly spelled out through the raps; the furniture moved in supra-mundane feats of power, and almost every conceivable phase of intelligent spiritual phenomena was exhibited to all who chose to come and witness it,"

Mr. Capron was one of the earliest investigators. It was at his request that the spirits resumed communication after their departure in November, 1848, and it was he who delivered the explanatory lecture at the first meeting in Corinthian Hall. His investigations are recorded in his book on "The Facts and Fanaticisms of Modern Spiritualism," which contains also letters written by numerous investigators, giving accounts of their experiences. Among these contributors are George Willetts, the hero of the fourth meeting at Rochester, and Rev. C. Hammond, who afterwards became a noted medium and inspired writer.

George Willetts visited Rochester during the summer of 1848, to negotiate with the owner of some land in Michigan which he wanted to buy. As a result of being introduced by Isaac Post to the Fox circle, he bought some land in Rochester, and settled in the district, having been foretold what land he would buy, the name of the owner, and the average price of the various lots—150 dollars. Later he was instructed how to find regular employment on the local railway "before the week was out." He was to see a Mr. Wiley at 2 o'clock on the Thursday following the Circle, but on Wednesday evening he learned that Mr. Wiley had gone to Boston and would not return till the Saturday. On Thursday, at 1.30, he informed the spirit friends of this, but they insisted on the visit, and on going to the railway office he found Mr. Wiley there! By dusk on Saturday he had heard nothing about employment, but at 8 o'clock he received instructions to start work on Monday morning.

Mr. Hammond's letter records a case of table-tilting and other physical phenomena, which he declares could not by any possibility have been produced by any member of the circle.

In the spring of 1850 the Fox family paid a visit to New York City, and gave many proofs of the genuineness of their mediumship. On one occasion a circle consisting of Fenimore Cooper, N. P. Willis, W. Cullen Bryant, Hosea Bigelow, G. Bancroft, and other men of note, met at the house of Dr. Griswold. Mrs. Fox, Mrs. Fish, Margaretta and Katie were all present. For about half-an-hour there

were no signs of spirit presence, but at last faint sounds began to be heard, these gradually becoming so loud and distinct that everyone was satisfied. On this occasion these tests took a peculiar form. The various investigators "fixed in their minds" the names of deceased friends and took turns in asking the communicators to answer questions about them. All the answers were stated to be correct.

Admirers of *The Last of the Mohicans* will be interested in Fenimore Cooper's test. In answer to questions he was told that the person he was thinking of was "a relative—a near relative—a woman—a sister—died fifty years previous—by accident—thrown from a horse." Mr. Cooper declared that the information was correct. Within a year both Cooper and Willis were in spirit life, their journey thither being no doubt brightened by their knowledge of what lay before them.

The remainder of the evening was devoted to physical phenomena, and the mediums were thoroughly tested.

Horace Greeley, the famous editor of the *New York Tribune*, invited the Foxes to spend a few days at his house, and there he devoted "what time he could spare out of three days" to investigation. His testimony, published in the *Tribune*, is all in favour of the mediums. He begins by stating the precautions taken at the various seances. "The rooms which they occupied at the hotel (Barnum's)" he says, "have been repeatedly searched and scrutinised; they have been taken, without an hour's notice, into houses they had never before entered; they have been unconsciously placed on a glass surface, concealed under a carpet, to interrupt electrical vibrations; they have been disrobed by a committee of ladies. . . . Yet we believe no one to this moment pretends that he has detected either of them in producing or causing the rappings."

Regarding the experiments in his own house, he says—"it would be the basest cowardice not to say that we are convinced beyond a doubt of their perfect integrity and good faith in the premises. Whatever may be the origin or cause of the rappings, the ladies in whose pre-

sence they occur do not make them. We tested this thoroughly and to our entire satisfaction. How they are caused and whence they proceed are questions which open a much wider field of enquiry, but if we were simply to print (which we shall not) the questions we asked and the answers we received, during a two hours' uninterrupted conference with 'the rappers,' we should be at once accused of having done so expressly to sustain the theory which regards these manifestations as the utterances of departed spirits."

In February, 1853, the Fox sisters were in Washington, and there their powers were tested by Governor Tallmadge, a distinguished United States Senator. He received many messages from a deceased friend named Calhoun, one being in direct writing. On one occasion the communicator said:—"My friend, the question is often put to you—'What good can result from these manifestations?' I will answer. It is to draw mankind together in harmony, and convince sceptics of the immortality of the soul." This reminded the Senator of an answer he had received at Bridgport in 1850 when he asked a similar question—"To unite mankind, and convince sceptics of the immortality of the soul." Surely no nobler ideal could form the basis of any Movement.

Yet another phase of mediumship was exhibited to Mr. N. Draper, of Rochester, who, "after the severest tests, under a variety of circumstances and in various places, for about a year," had been convinced of Spirit Return. His wife was a "magnetic" clairvoyant, and through her he tried to find an answer to the question—"Is it practicable to have communication between two distant points by means of these rappings?" A spirit claiming to be Benjamin Franklin undertook to do this, and made an appointment for Friday, 15th February, 1850. On that date the circle met, and Mrs. Fox and Katie, with Rev. A. H. Jervis to take notes, went into one room, while Margaretta, with Mr. Draper to take notes, went into another. They were just beginning to get results when several unauthorised persons entered both rooms. The only message received by Mr. Draper was—"Things are not as I directed; therefore you cannot proceed at this

time. There should be but four in each room." Mr. Jervis received a similar message. A further meeting was arranged for the 20th, and on that date the mediums and scribes were as before, the required numbers being made up by reliable investigators. The rappings sounded like the clicking of a telegraph instrument, and each party received the following message—"There will be great changes in the nineteenth century. Things that may look dark and mysterious to you will be laid plain before your sight. Mysteries are going to be revealed. The world will be enlightened. I sign my name, Benjamin Franklin." To Mr. Draper's message was added—"Do not go into the other room," while Mr. Jervis's addition read—"Go into the parlour and compare notes." Dr. Frankin had fulfilled his undertaking.

The message was vague, and we can hardly claim that the promised enlightenment has been realised—but this and the other phases mentioned show in how many ways the spirit operators are able to manifest, if we will only give them the proper conditions.

CHAPTER X.

EXPERIENCES AND EXPERIMENTS.

In the early days of the Modern Movement, American mediumship seems to have reached a very high standard. A great psychic wave had passed over the United States, and from every direction, and from the most unexpected quarters, came reports of wonderful psychic happenings.

"GOD'S TELEGRAPH."

The Rev. A. H. Jervis, who held circles at his own home, with members of his own family as mediums, tells a convincing story regarding a friend named Pickard. Mr. Pickard, after having had his mother convincingly described at the Jervis household, spent the night of Monday, 9th April, 1849, at the house of a mutual friend, and on Tuesday morning received a communication purporting to come from his mother, and telling him—"your child is dead."

"He came immediately to my place," writes Mr. Jervis, "and said he should take the stage for home

(Lockport, sixty miles distant) ; accordingly (and wholly on the faith of the spirit's communication, remember) he left in the stage at 8 a.m. At twelve that day I returned to my home, my wife meeting me with a telegraph envelope, which I first read mentally, and then breaking the seal read as follows:—

“ Rochester, April 10th, 1849.

By telegraph from Lockport to Rev. A. H. Jervis, No. 4, West Street: Tell Mr. Pickard, if you can find him, his child died this morning. Answer. R. Mallory.

“ I then said to my wife—‘ God’s telegraph has outdone Morse’s altogether.’ ”

PHASES OF MEDIUMSHIP.

But not only did the Spirit Friends show their knowledge of intimate personal affairs—they were able to manifest their powers in many other directions. Mr. Capron, of Auburn, describes the remarkable mediumship of Mrs. Tamlin, who, he claims, was the first medium through whom musical instruments were played without physical contact, so that tunes could be recognised.

“ On one occasion,” he states, “ after sitting a few minutes, we heard a low sound like a distant locomotive whistle. Soon, however, the sound grew louder, and softened into the most exquisite music. One of the company was requested to sing, and she did so; the most beautiful music accompanied. It was like the notes of an exquisite Æolian harp, but any attempt to describe its beauty would fail.

“ We frequently had the same kind of music with Mrs. Tamlin,” he continues. “ At times it would resemble the finest conceivable tones of the human voice, and almost seemed to dissolve into words.”

And mark this—“ It (the music) was played with all the exactness of an experienced musician, although she is not acquainted with music, or herself able to play on any instrument. The tones varied from loud and vigorous to the most refined touches of the strings that could be imagined.”

Another phase was manifested in the powers possessed by Miss Latira Edmonds (daughter of Judge

Edmonds) who "became developed as an excellent medium for trance speaking, the discerning of spirits, the gift of tongues (including several dead and living languages unknown to herself), the ability to travel clairvoyantly to distant places, and communicate with absent friends by the mental telegraph."

Still another was the writing mediumship of Mrs. Seymour of Waukegan, N.Y., as described in the *Spiritual Telegraph* in June, 1853. This medium, when entranced, wrote communications on her arms with the points of her fingers (sometimes the message would be started on one arm and finished on the other). After some minutes, the writing began to appear as raised letters that could be seen and felt. At first of a whitish appearance, the letters afterwards became a bright red, remaining distinct and legible for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then gradually fading, leaving the skin smooth and unmarked.

There were many other phases, but the limitations of space prevent their being described here. The foregoing, however, will give some idea of the work performed by the spirit operators. And students cannot but be grateful to the observers of those early days, who took such copious notes of the varied happenings. Nor were the observers uncritical or untrained. Many men of standing in the medical, legal or scientific world studied the phenomena, and employed in their investigations the same care and ability that had made them eminent in their professions.

A JUDICIAL EXPERIMENTER.

Judge Edmonds was an eminent American lawyer, and a Judge of the Court of Appeals of New York State. His attention was first called to the subject of spiritual intercourse in January, 1851, and his methods and observations can best be judged from his "Appeal to the Public"—published in August, 1853, as a reply to scurrilous newspaper attacks on his sanity and his honour.

"I was invited by a friend," he states, "to witness the 'Rochester Knockings.' I complied, chiefly to oblige her and to while away a tedious hour. I thought a good deal of what I witnessed, and I determined to investigate

the matter, and to find out what it was. If it was a deception, or a delusion, I thought that I could detect it. For about four months I devoted at least two evenings in a week, and sometimes more, to witnessing the phenomena in all its phases. I kept careful records of all I witnessed, and from time to time compared them with each other, to detect inconsistencies and contradictions. I read all I could lay my hands on, on the subject, and especially all the professed 'exposures of the humbug.' I went from place to place seeing different mediums, meeting with different parties of persons; often with people whom I had never seen before, and sometimes where I was myself entirely unknown; sometimes in the dark and sometimes in the light; often with inveterate unbelievers, and more frequently with zealous believers. . . . At length the evidence came, and in such force that no sane man could withhold his faith.

"Thus far the question I was investigating was, whether what I saw was produced by mere mortal means, or by some invisible unknown agency; in other words, whether it was a deception, an imposition, or what it professed to be—the product of some unknown, unseen cause."

He first studied the "rappings," and was at a loss to tell how the mediums could cause the varied phenomena which he witnessed. At last—"After depending on my senses as to these various phases of the phenomena, I invoked the aid of science, and with the assistance of an accomplished electrician and his machinery, and eight or ten intelligent, educated, shrewd persons, examined the matter. We pursued our inquiries many days, and established to our satisfaction two things: first, that the sounds were not produced by the agency of any person present or near us; and, second, that they were not forthcoming at our will or pleasure."

He next studied all possible phases of physical and mental phenomena, and had many remarkable experiences—at last arriving at a definite conclusion.

"All this, and much, very much more of a cognate nature, went to show me that there was a high order of intelligence involved in this new phenomenon—an intel-

gence outside of and beyond mere mortal agency; for there was no other hypothesis which I could devise or hear of, could at all explain that, whose reality is established by the testimony of tens of thousands, and can easily be ascertained by any one who will take the trouble to inquire. . . .

"I went into the investigation originally thinking it a deception, and intending to make public my exposure of it. Having, from my researches, come to a different conclusion, I feel that the obligation to make known the result is just as strong. Therefore it is, mainly, that I give the result to the world. I say mainly, because there is another consideration which influences me; and that is the desire to extend to others a knowledge which I am conscious can make them happier and better."

SPIRITUALISM AND SCIENCE.

Dr. Robert Hare was Professor of Chemistry in Pennsylvania University, and "felt called upon, as an act of duty to his fellow creatures, to bring whatever influence he possessed to the attempt to stem the tide of 'popular madness' which, in defiance of reason and science, was fast setting in favour of the gross delusion called Spiritualism." Accordingly he began, as so many do even in these days, by writing to the press, and stating that he could explain Spiritualism "on electrical grounds." This statement was broadcasted by the press of America, and resulted in a challenge to the Professor to examine the phenomena for himself. He accepted the challenge, and besides testing the intelligence of the communicating power through an immense number of mediums, invented all sorts of machinery through which he promised to detect "tricky spirits."

"First," writes Mr. S. B. Britain, "to satisfy himself that the (table) movements were not the work of mortals, he took brass billiard balls, placed them on zinc plates, and placed the hands of the mediums on the balls, and to his great astonishment the tables *moved*. He next arranged a table to slide backward and forward, to which attachments were made, causing a disc to revolve containing the alphabet, *hidden from the view of the*

mediums. The letters were variously arranged, out of their regular consecutive order, and the spirit was required to place them consecutively, or in their regular places. And behold, it was done! Then followed intelligent sentences, which the medium could not see or know the import of till they were told him. . . ."

At the New York Spiritualist Conference, in 1854, the Professor gave an interesting account of various experiences, and described how the presence of a sceptical professor had prevented phenomena until another professor was introduced to the circle. To explain this he propounded a remarkable theory. "Inasmuch as there were degrees of mediumship, it was natural to suppose that they shaded off, until they presented in some persons, and especially sceptics, a positive and antipodal power, which balanced and overcame that of the spirit through the medium"—hence no results.

In 1856, as a result of his attempt to expose the "gross delusion," he published his "Spiritualism Scientifically Demonstrated," in which he presented an imposing array of testimony in favour of spirit return and communication.

The brief accounts and extracts given in this and the preceding chapters concern only a few of the many mediums through whom phenomena were witnessed, and of the many competent investigators who experimented with the new revelation of spirit power which had burst so dramatically on a materialistic world. They all worked carefully and conscientiously, and were as precise and careful in their records as they had been in their experiments. We reap the fruits of their arduous toil, and present-day investigators can feel confident that the Movement to which they are being introduced is built on the sure rock of painstaking investigation and scientific verification.

CHAPTER XI.

FANTASTIC SPIRITUALISM.

The supreme test of the real strength and value of a Movement is the extent to which it can overcome the handicap of attracting cranks and charlatans to its ranks,

and of having what is claimed as its philosophy "explained" by ignorant enthusiasts whose only claim to note is their extreme credulity and intense self-satisfaction—both due to their ignorance. In these ways Spiritualism has been handicapped very heavily—and yet, so strong and reliable is the body of evidence on which our Movement is based that, despite the fanatical and nonsensical outpourings of professing Spiritualists, the Cause of Spiritualism has proceeded from victory to victory.

In Spiritualism there never has been any excuse for indulging in fantastic tricks, because, from the very beginning, the spirit communicators tried to explain the conditions required for reliable and helpful spirit intercourse, and how communications could best be obtained. Even as early as 1848, it was pointed out that communication depended on the magnetic affinity of the spirit and the medium, and was affected by the medium's mental attitude and mental and psychical development. But, unfortunately, this teaching was either unheeded or forgotten by some of the early investigators, many of whom also seemed to have left their good manners behind them when they visited a *seance*. Let Mrs. Britten tell us:—

"The *seances* of the Misses Fox were constantly broken up by inharmony, rudeness, and determined opposition on the part of some of the visitors. The company were driven from room to room by incessant intrusions. . . ." Also, "in the meetings which now began to take place in hundreds of families, the ignorance and superstition which had formerly prevailed on all subjects connected with the life beyond the grave, either continued to characterise the communications or became apparent in an excess of fanatical credulity. . . . In some of the circles where entranced clairvoyant or impressional mediums presided, the wildest scenes of confusion would often prevail. Two or three of 'the prophets' would be jabbering in unknown tongues at once, whilst others would be shouting the war-hoop of the red Indian. "Apostolic" letters, in miserable grammar and worse spelling, were palmed off as genuine productions from the seventh sphere; and all the crudities of impressible minds, stimulated half to frenzy by the contagious excitement of the

times, were set down as direct communications from exalted ancients whose authoritative teachings no doubt emanated from the fantastic imaginings of self-psychologised persons." Again—"fanatical religionists of different sects had forced themselves into the family gatherings, and the wildest scenes of rant, cant and absurdity, often ensued. Opinions of the most astounding nature were hazarded concerning the object of this movement; some determining that it was a millennium, and looking for the speedy reign of a personal Messiah and the equally speedy destruction of the wicked. Boisterous sounds accompanied the fervent prayers of the ranters, and wild confusion, in which invisible actors played their weird part, added to the distraction of the already tortured mediums."

The worst outbreak of this disease occurred at Auburn, where "several extremely ignorant but strongly bigoted persons of the Second Advent persuasion" had joined the Spiritualists. The millennial dawn was approaching, and (of course) THEY were "the chosen ones through whom the millennial dynasty was to be established on earth." As soon as they gained control of the Auburn Circle they secured the services of Mrs. Benedict, an impressible rapping medium, through whom the influences mortal and immortal that operated in this circle, dictated plans of action designed to make the universe rock, and that part of which they modestly called *this little planet*, a convert to their faith and a subject to the spiritual authority of *John the Divine*, *Daniel the Prophet*, *Paul the Apostle*, and other Biblical worthies whom they assumed to have become temporarily reincarnated in their mediumship." The title of the circle was changed to the "Apostolic Circle," and later to the "Apostolic Brotherhood," and Rev. James D. Scott was engaged as minister. A series of papers from the aforementioned eminent guides was published, one result being to cause educated Spiritualists to "mourn over the deterioration in grammar and orthography which befalls the exalted dead by a long residence in the spirit-world."

The advent of Mr. Scott raised the literary tone of the

Brotherhood, and every prospect was pleasing when the Rev. Thomas L. Harris, a renowned poet, preacher and medium, espoused their cause and joined their ranks. The movement gained in membership and importance, and finally expressed itself in what became known as the "Mountain Cove Movement."

The two reverend gentlemen assumed complete control of the Brotherhood, and announced their collaboration with some very eminent spirit entities. Mr. Harris was inspired by St. Paul, whilst St. John the Divine was the author of all Mr. Scott's teachings. Later, when, in October, 1851, the Brotherhood moved to Mountain Cove, in Virginia, and all property was made common, Mr. Scott became promoted to "the counsels of the Most High," and under this plenary inspiration "claimed supreme and unquestionable authority in all matters, whether social, religious, temporal, eternal *or financial*, that concerned those who were privileged with him to share the joys of the holy mountain."—which, by the way, was the abiding place of the prophet Isaiah.

At first everything was full of promise. The land was to be purchased and then resold to the brethren; businesses and industries were to be established; schools were to be founded—and the whole movement was to be under direction from the spirit-world. But soon, "standing face to face with God," Mr. Scott was appointed *medium absolute*, and the only vehicle of divine truth. On the other hand, Byron, Keats, Shelley, and other famous poets, wrote poems through Mr. Harris for the *Mountain Cove Journal*

The rest of the history of this fantastic movement is too sad and distressing to be given in any detail. Suffice it to say that after a time quarrels arose on financial and other matters, and finally the movement dispersed.

The recording of these particulars has not been a pleasant task, and would not have been undertaken but for two reasons—first, that it has been thought best to give a faithful picture of the early days of our Movement; and second, that it may serve as a warning to intelligent investigators, so that they will resist all temptations to

indulge fanaticism either in themselves or others. The pity is that this form of fantastic nonsense did not die out with the early days. It still exists, in many forms, in the present day. Most readers will be shocked by the rank blasphemy of the "Apostolic" leaders, but equally blasphemous claims are made by many people, more or less mentally unbalanced, who unfortunately, like Messrs. Scott and Harris, have followers who believe in them. The crank, the zealot and the bigot, who wish to distort the teachings of Spiritualism into a semblance of their own particular religious dogmas; the sentimental ignoramus who allows himself to be swindled into the belief that he is in direct touch with sublime entities, the greatness of whose minds is beyond his comprehension; the would be (*must be*) leader, who is "inspired" from the highest spheres, but only leads his infatuated flock into disaster or ridicule; the "inspired" teacher who solemnly talks the most utter drivel—all these are known to the reader, as is the feeling of humiliation and discouragement experienced when one or other of them provides splendid material for the attacks of sceptics and opponents. So it can be fully realised what great disabilities these people imposed on the infant Movement, and what a healthy infant it must have been to grow, in spite of everything, to its present size and strength.

May the day soon come when these infantile ailments will have been conquered, and Spiritualists will be able to look back at them with a sigh—of sympathy for those who had to suffer from them; of relief that they are things of the past.

CHAPTER XII.

SANE SPIRITUALISM.

Spiritualism, we are taught, is a science, a philosophy and a new revelation of religion; therefore all who desire a sound knowledge of the subject must study it and consider it in all its three phases. At present there would seem to be a regrettable tendency in some quarters to subordinate teaching to propaganda—indeed, some societies provide no study classes for members or inquirers, devoting all their energy to propaganda work. As the average propaganda

address cannot be more than a general outline of our claims, this really means that the demonstrative side of Spiritualism is being given undue prominence—and science does much more than merely demonstrate, or record demonstration: it inquires into causes and attempts to explain effects.

That those on the spirit side are ready and willing to help us in our inquiries was shown very early in the modern movement. As soon as the telegraphic code was adopted at Rochester, the spirit communicators began to teach as well as demonstrate. Attempts were made at various circles to explain the powers and methods used, and all these various explanations are in general agreement. The explanation given to the "Koons" circle, in 1853, will serve as a sample.

"Spirits," we are told, "in their communion with earth, manifest through two primitive elements; namely, first, an electro-magnetic element of which the spirit body is composed; next a physical aura, which emanates from the medium, or can be collected from material substances. From the combination of these two, namely, the emanations of the spirit and the medium, a third or composite is formed, which is affected by the atmosphere and (? other) human emanations. From the preponderance of the electro-magnetic or spiritual element, the laws of cohesion and gravitation can be overcome, and through this spirits are enabled to dissolve and recompose substances with great rapidity, heave up and carry material bodies through the air, and cause them to float or sink in proportion to the strength of the battery formed. It is this element which enables some spirits highly charged with it to come into contact with matter, and thus to use pencils, pens, etc., in writing, drawing and playing on musical instruments. By aid of the physical or human aura—animal magnetism—they cause concussions, raps, shaking of furniture and heavy bodies; by this also they produce spirit light, gathering it up so as to form an envelope of matter around their own hands; condense sound so as to be heard singing or speaking; and strike upon the heavier instruments. The composite element is used more or less in all modes."

Again—"The power by which spirits can act upon matter at all is limited, ill understood even by themselves, and at present in a merely experimental state of control; hence the quantity and power of the manifestations is determined by conditions too complex and subtle, and as yet too remote from the sphere of material science, for human comprehension. Moreover, every communication, howsoever transmitted through a human organism, partakes so closely of the idiosyncracies of the medium that whilst the idea may originate in the spirit-world, the form of the communication must assume the shape of the mediums' mind and the measure of their force. Beyond the occasional introduction of a few words, sentences, or forms of writing and expression it is almost impossible for the mightiest controlling spirit far to transcend these limits; hence their ideas not only sink to the level of the mediums' capacity in transmission, but often become so merged in their magnetism as to lose the stamp of their spiritual origin altogether."

The last quotation contains not only an explanation but a warning—emphasising the care that must be exercised in considering messages from the spirit-side. Each investigator must decide for himself the mental status of the medium through which the communication comes—and accept or reject accordingly. And each investigator should be properly equipped for the full understanding of all the phenomena he may witness. It is a very dangerous practice to allow people with no knowledge whatever of mental or psychic laws, and without any preparation, to witness phenomena of which in most cases they get only the demonstration, without a word of explanation. The equipment should take the form of text-books, issued or approved by a central (national) educational authority. This central committee should be selected from all sections of the Spiritualist Movement—organised and un-organised—and under its direction every phase of phenomena would be studied, and the best scientific minds in the Movement invited to contribute their knowledge and ability to the compilation of text-books. The task undertaken would be a heavy one, but the results would be so great that any toil or sacrifice would be repaid a hundredfold. If we pause to think of the strong position in which Spiritualism

would stand, with a series of graduated textbooks, in which all the phenomena recorded had been verified, classified and tabulated, so that even the novice would be able to get a general idea of their significance—if we think of this, we must agree that a strong and united effort should be made to set up the committee and start it at once on its work.

But Spiritualism is much more than merely a science, and the central educational authority must be more than a scientific records committee. The philosophic section would take the text-books authorised by the scientific section, and with these as a basis would secure that men and women of acknowledged broad-mindedness should be invited to search for the general laws governing the phenomena and the general theories justified by the facts. Their findings could be published either separately or as part of the text-books to which they would refer, and thenceforth no inquirer *need* go into a seance-room ignorant of what is going to (or is likely to) happen.

It may be objected that committees are doubtful quantities, and that an educational authority, once firmly established, might attempt to become dogmatic. But it would be the duty of the Movement so to define the duties, powers and duration of the committee, that no question of domination by individuals or groups could ever arise. If the committee was chosen by and from the National Union, the Lyceum Union, the London Spiritualist Alliance, the College of Psychic Science, and other leading Spiritualist bodies, practically every point of view would be fairly represented; and besides, the committee would not **COMPILE**, but only **APPROVE** or **REJECT**—and then only on questions of verifiable fact or logical deduction.

This is not the place, nor the occasion, to go deeper into the constitution of such a committee, but it is a subject that could well be debated by Study Classes and Liberty Groups. If the rapidly extending Movement of Spiritualism is to be placed on a sound basis, something of this or a similar nature must be done—and quickly. Interest in our Movement is spreading at a remarkable rate, and it is the duty of the Movement to provide reliable information, in cheap book form, for all who may make inquiries. The

knowledge of Spiritualism should not be confined to those who can afford to buy expensive books or become members of expensive research societies. And it is only by the wide dissemination of knowledge that we shall be able to secure and ensure a sane Spiritualism. (May I explain, for the sake of junior students, that the word "sane" is here used in its root meaning of "sound, or healthy.")

In deciding what would be a sane Spiritualism, we must bear in mind what, as a Movement, Spiritualism has set out to do. The object of all Spiritualistic propaganda is to convince mankind of the continuity of conscious individual existence, through and after bodily death; to prove beyond all doubt that those who have passed through the veil are still able to communicate with us, and to give us descriptions of the world beyond. In a sane Spiritualism, only those who had qualified as exponents or demonstrators would be allowed to officiate, and only properly developed mediums would be allowed to act as authorised transmitters between the spirit spheres and our own. If the mental, spiritual and psychic development of the medium influences the quality and value of the messages sent through, then it can be nothing more than ordinary common-sense to provide that in the development of a medium, mental and spiritual culture should be put on an equal footing with psychic culture.

But not only the exponents would be cared for by a sane Spiritualism. Those "in high places" would realise that a *healthy mind in a healthy body* refers to great Movements as well as to individuals; and they would ensure a healthy "body" by insisting on a comprehensive grasp of the science and the philosophy of Spiritualism as a qualification for full membership in any affiliated church—and on the establishment of educational classes, under competent instructors, as an essential condition of affiliation.

In short, a sane Spiritualism would be a Spiritualism in which not only the leaders, but every member of the rank and file, would be well-informed, and capable of drawing helpful lessons from the facts at their disposal; a Spiritualism which would command the respect of opponents, the attention of inquirers, the labours of investiga-

tors and the support of all lovers of progress and reform.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOME PROBLEMS OF THE FUTURE.

It may seem at first sight that a chapter dealing with the future is out of place in what purports to be a history of the past. But there is really a logical connection. As the present position of Spiritualism as a Movement is mainly the result of the efforts of past workers, and as its position in the future will depend on the efforts of present-day workers, it may assist in the choosing of present-day policy to consider some of the problems which, sooner or later, the Spiritualist Movement will be called upon to face.

The most urgent problem, and one which has occupied and is occupying a foremost place at both National and Lyceum Union Conferences, is that of organisation. Shall we allow the powers of government to be more and more centralised—or shall we extend our system of partial local autonomy, with a central body (representative of all its units) as an ultimate court of appeal? Shall we allow our legislators to establish a Spiritualist “Rome”—or or shall we develop our present organisation, with the Districts given a free hand in administering, according to local needs, a common policy? Shall we allow the Societies to become the masters of the Lyceums in matters of government—or shall we insist on the Lyceums being free from the domination of those who, not having had any experience of the Lyceum system, or Lyceum methods, are totally unfitted, through their lack of knowledge and of the sympathy that knowledge brings, to assume such a responsible task? These questions require very careful consideration, as on our answers will depend the direction of present activities.

There is much that might be argued in favour of centralisation—as, for instance, the story of evolution. “In the beginning” we find nothing but “so many” individuals, each living for itself and ready to destroy or devour its neighbour. A later development is that of families or packs, the members of which combined for common purposes, but were ready on other occasions to fly at each

others' throats. Gradually we reach what seems the final stage, of human beings living in orderly communities, obedient (in normal times) more or less to a central government. So it might be argued that, the nearer we approach to centralisation, the nearer we attain to the apparently ultimate aim of evolution. But we must remember that Nature, when approaching perfection in some particular direction, has frequently altered or modified her course so as to attain even greater perfection—and where alteration did not come stagnation was the result. Nor must we forget the claims of evolutionists that the birds, in adapting themselves for life in the air, and persisting in the pursuit of this adaptation, lost the opportunity of attaining to the use of human arms or the development of a human head or brain. With these in mind, we must ask ourselves whether we should not be more closely following the true trend of evolution if we combined individuality with centralisation and thus obtained the undoubted good qualities of both—co-operation of individual initiative with loyalty to an agreed central policy. If we decide to do this, we shall turn our backs on all Roman models, and build up an organisation modelled somewhat on the lines of the British Empire—wherein each community in membership would be free to shape its policy in accordance with its own known local requirements, but yet wherein all would work to a common central ideal.

When considering the relationship of Societies and Lyceums, we must bear in mind the foregoing, and also the broad distinction between the two bodies—that, whereas the average Society is a propaganda body, every Lyceum is designed to be an educational body. For successful propaganda organisation, business ability is as a rule sufficient—but for Lyceum work much more is required. It would never do to organise a Lyceum on merely business lines—what is needed just as much is an understanding of what is required by those anxious to acquire knowledge, and a broad-minded determination that this knowledge will be supplied in the manner in which it can best be assimilated. So it is a matter for grave consideration whether the Lyceums would be wise to agree to even a

benevolent despotism—seeing that arbitrary power might fall into the hands of those who were bigoted; hostile or indifferent.

When the question of organisation has once been settled, the next problem that will need to be tackled is that of education—elementary and advanced. What is the Spiritualist Movement going to do? Is it going to ignore the old Jesuit boast—"Give me a child until he is twelve, and I don't care who gets him then"—and allow Spiritualist children to be taught things that are going to distort all their views on life? Or is it going to organise and work towards the establishment of elementary schools, modelled on the Lyceum plan, where the children will be taught nothing but what will help them to become useful, intelligent citizens, with the power to think and judge for themselves—and thus well armed to take a successful part in the battle of life?

It has been said, rather bitterly, that the present Board School system does little but turn out workers capable of making up a tolerably correct time-sheet. Whilst this is perhaps an exaggeration, it must be conceded that the elementary schools might do much more for the intellectual (the really educational) advancement of the children. But it is one thing to diagnose a disease, and quite another to find a satisfactory and permanent cure. At present, organised Spiritualism is not strong enough, financially and numerically, to establish such schools as would be desirable and beneficial, or to justify such a heavy outlay as would be required. So the problem here is to find a substitute that will serve until such time as financial and numerical strength will justify the necessary expenditure. The scheme of continuous education drawn up by the Joint Committee is a step in the right direction—but ONLY a step—and the brightest hope, as far as can be seen at present, would seem to lie in the development of the occasional midweek classes, now held independently by the various progressive Lyceums, into a night school for the district, where, every night, classes would be held in which the children would be taught elementary sciences (simple experiments with simple explanations), elementary Logic (Euclid, Book I, would

be a good start), and elementary psychology—under the tuition of qualified teachers. Where are the teachers to be found? That is a problem that the Spiritualist Movement must tackle—AND SOLVE.

Then there is the problem of religion. The Principles of Spiritualism would seem to be broad enough to cover the religious tendencies of all who accept Spirit Return as a proven fact. But there are many who accept this fact and yet are not willing to accept all the Principles. What attitude is the Spiritualism of the future to adopt? Is it to insist on the acceptance of all the Principles, with a given definition of "Personal Responsibility, with Compensation and Retribution" and "Eternal Progression, open to Every Soul"—or should it accept all who are willing to affirm that they are convinced of Spirit Return, and the continuity of conscious individual existence? History teaches us that it is not wise to insist on belief in rigid definitions. The Spanish Inquisition; the religious persecutions in England, where first one Christian sect, and then another, oppressed or tortured or "martyred" those who differed in belief; the various massacres of one Christian community by another, as described by Gibbon; the readiness with which believers in any one religion have always persecuted believers in another—all these go to prove that man, when his religious conceptions are narrow and limited, is capable of being revoltingly brutal in his attempts to impose his own narrow beliefs on others; but also that man will suffer martyrdom and massacre rather than submit to being coerced in his idea of his relationship with God, and that freedom of individual opinion is a real safety-valve in religion.

But on the other hand, all the various Christian sects, whilst differing on minor matters, are at one in insisting on the acceptance by all professing Christians of certain central facts and doctrines. And, just as with too great rigidity, there is danger in allowing too much latitude. Let us imagine an orthodox Churchman who believed in Spirit Return as a member of the Lyceum Union M.C., or of the Education or Manual Revision Committees, and we shall be able to realise the consequences of allowing such as he to join organised Spiritualism with their present con-

victions. Perhaps a happy mean between these two extremes can be found; but until it is found the Principles, with liberty of personal interpretation, seem to be the fairest and safest conditions of admission to Spiritualism. But whatever else may be open to compromise, it should always be insisted on that Spiritualism is a phase of Religion.

But if we insist on being regarded as a religious body, we must declare our convictions on various questions of the day; and one of the most important of these is politics. As Spiritualists we all desire "recognition" but is this to include political power? Are we to have our own M.P.'s and our representatives in the House of Peers? The answer to these questions seems fairly obvious. There could be no objection to Spiritualists going to Parliament as representatives of a constituency—but every objection to them as representatives of a religion. Spiritualism aims at abolishing—not accentuating—religious differences, and representation as such in either house would mean a greater loss in moral prestige than could be balanced by any gain in political power. The answer, then, would appear to be that Spiritualism should strive to influence politics amongst the electors, teaching the rights and duties of citizenship, and that politics is not "a dirty game," but the science of government. With an electorate that knew what it wanted—and how to get it—the political problem would be solved.

Another problem that must be considered, and decided upon, is the Spiritualist attitude towards war. There are many earnest Spiritualists who consider that the statement—"all war is murder"—is far too sweeping in its application. There is the question of a defensive war. Are we to sit still, whilst foreign hordes invade our country, bringing with them all the horrors that accompany invasion? Are we to try to argue the ideals of brotherhood with armies bent on conquest? Or are we not "ignominious cowards" if we do not strive to our utmost in the defence of those we hold dear? There would appear to be only one answer to each of these questions; but even those who answer the last question in the affirmative must

be agreed that a war of offence has, and can have, no justification. Whatever our opinions, we must admit that "wars and rumours of wars" are regrettable realities.

We must admit the tendency, all through nature, to resort to battle in settlement of disputes and differences—also that man has evolved from lower states of life and, sad to say, brought his fighting tendencies with him. There is but a series of steps between fighting with fists, and fighting with knives, with swords or with rifles and cannon; and until man has evolved on the mental and spiritual planes till he looks on the mere idea of war with horror, wars will continue. The question of our attitude, or whether we should be allowed to adopt an attitude, is one very hard to answer. The Quakers, who were allowed to stand aside in 1914-18, form a small proportion of the population; and when others brought forward conscientious objections to warfare, the Government refused to listen. So it is questionable if the preaching of conscientious objections would prove to be any solution to the problem. The only solution would be to work for a great advance in spiritual evolution, and, beginning with the children of the present, ensure by our teaching that the men and women of the future would declare that war, with all its horrors, must be abolished from the earth. But this teaching must take place in all lands, "for not this man and that man, but all men make up mankind." The problem, then, is—how this teaching is to be introduced into other lands. The solution may lie in the Spiritualists' International Federation.

These are only a few of the problems that confront the Spiritualist Movement. The future of our own children: the future of other people's children: will depend on what solution is found. The problems loom before us gigantic and formidable, but courage and a strong faith will carry us to victory. And when victory has been gained, we shall be able to look back with pride on our achievements, and think ourselves worthy of the noble band of spirits who, in 1848, broke through the barriers of materialism and brought about the great spiritual Advent.